

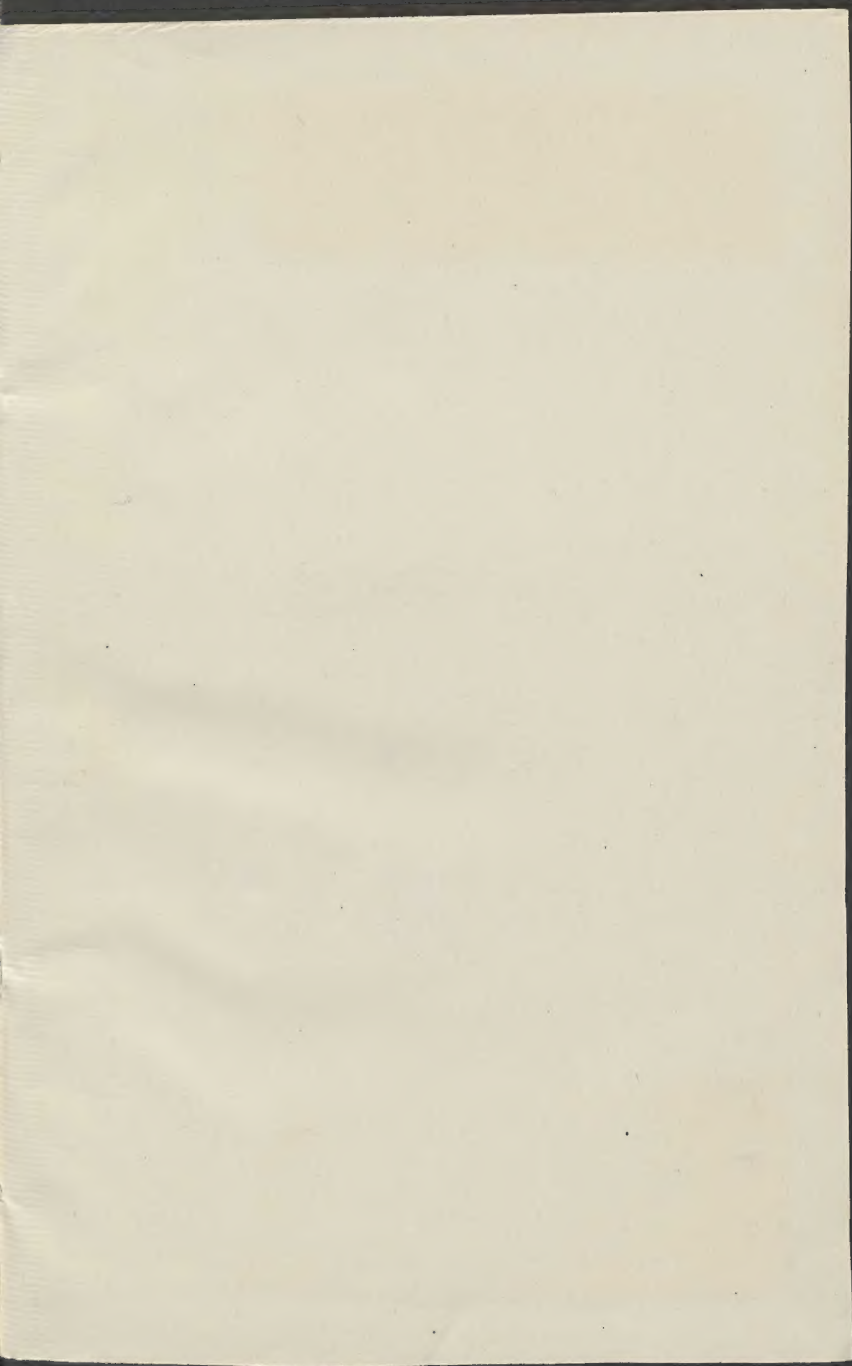
Railway Reading.

A
YACHT VOYAGE
TO
ICELAND.

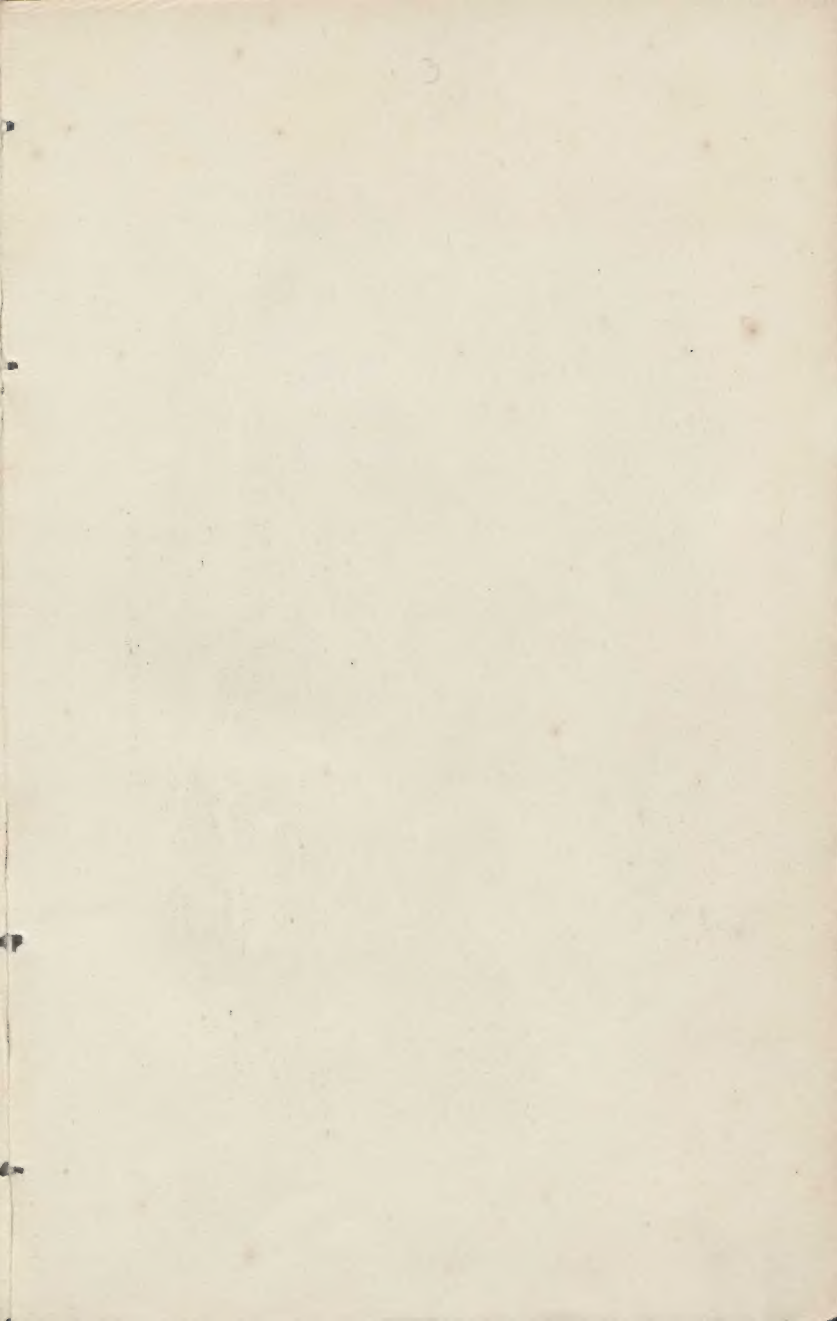
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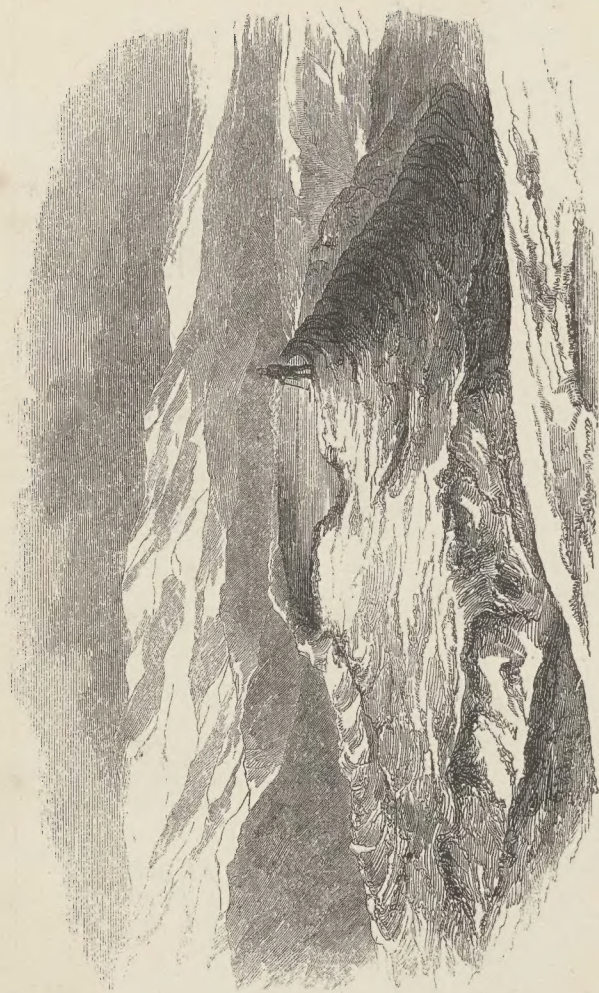
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YACHT VOYAGE TO ICELAND.





The Great Geysir, when at rest.

A

YACHT VOYAGE TO ICELAND,

IN 1853.

[*Dawson*]

LONDON :
ARTHUR HALL, VIRTUE, AND CO.,
25, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1854.

6

JOHN CHILDS AND SON, BUNGAY.

Snaefells Jökull



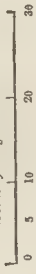
Stapfen

THE SOUTH-WEST CORNER

OF

ICELAND.

Scale of English Miles.



The Great South Western Bay

B a y

Bjornafell

Lager vinn

Almannagja

Thingvall

Reykjavik

Havna fjord

Ingoldsfjall

Reykir

Olfusa

Krisevick

Cape Reikians

River Witla

River Sog

Stalholt

Our Camp

Heila



YACHT VOYAGE TO ICELAND.

EARLY in the morning of June 10th we got under way from Birkenhead, and dropped down the Mersey with the ebb tide. It was a dreary beginning to our voyage; a thick drizzling rain was falling, with light airs from the westward.

In our passage hence to the northward we were constantly delayed by calms and contrary winds, so that it was not until the 15th that we finally bade adieu to the Queen's dominions, taking our *departure*, as it is technically called, from the island of Innistrahull, on the north coast of Ireland.

From this time until we sighted the Iceland coast, on the 22nd, but little occurred that is worthy of relating: a strong breeze on the 16th and 17th helped us capitally along, but reduced us to very small sail. At the same time we had an opportunity of witnessing that truly noble sight, *a grand Atlantic roll*. It was delightful to watch our pretty little vessel bounding lightly and easily over the huge high seas, and to hold the helm at such a time is, perhaps, the greatest of the pleasures that a yachting trip affords. The sensation is that of rapid motion, wild and headlong, yet under perfect control; and may be compared to a gallop in the hunting field on a magnificent scale, or a ride upon Mazeppa's steed with a bridle that he must obey.

It was pleasant to observe the nights gradually sinking into perfect insignificance as we made our Northing. Each night then

was a later and later call for the binnacle lamp; and after gaining the latitude of 60° or thereabouts, all lamps and candles became useless lumber, and were permanently stowed away underneath a thousand more useful stores.

We observed pretty constantly the temperature of the air and water, and obtained the following results.

1. That the water was, throughout the voyage out, warmer than the midnight air.

2. That the water near Iceland was only about 2 degrees Fahr. lower in temperature than that near the coast of Ireland: the former averaging 52° , the latter 54° .

We also sent down an empty bottle, securely corked, to the depth of 180 fathoms. It came up filled; the cork being partially, but not entirely, forced in. This water was of the temperature of $51^{\circ}.5$, while that at the surface was at 52° .

A thick fog on the evening of the 21st compelled us to heave-to, and wait for clearer weather; as we judged we had now nearly run our distance to the *Westmann Islands* on the south coast of Iceland. Early the next morning we stood on, and, shortly after, sighted these islands and the mainland also.

Our first impressions of the country were most favourable: as we drew in towards the shore, we had on our left hand the above-mentioned islands, a most picturesque group of six or seven, which rose prettily out of the sea in all manner of abrupt, fantastic shapes. And immediately before us there rose a huge snowy mountain on the mainland, the grandeur of which could not easily be surpassed. We supposed it, of course, to be Heckla, but in this we found afterwards we were mistaken. On drawing still nearer the coast, we were deeply im-

pressed with the stern and desolate grandeur of its scenery. It seemed one unbroken line of lava precipices, without one spot inhabited or even habitable : and a huge "moving" glacier, similar to those of Switzerland, but of far grander proportions, descending in "toppling crags of ice" almost to the sea level, completed the scene of desolation.

We hove-to for an hour to sketch the mountain and to double reef our sails, for it was blowing fresh. And then began to beat along the coast to the westward. Towards noon we had arrived at a less dreary tract of country, and as we reached in shore near a low sandy beach, we had an opportunity of getting a first peep at the Icelanders and their doings. We made out their little grass-roofed huts, and their boats drawn up on shore ; and observed a team of horses and a waggon load of wood. Common-place as all this may seem, it was

to us as interesting and exciting as if we had been the first discoverers of an unknown land.

In the afternoon we reached over to the Westmann Islands, and finding out their only little village and harbour, we cautiously piloted ourselves close in, and set off in a boat to have a shot at the innumerable sea fowl lodged in the rocky precipices close by. While on our way, however, a boat put off to us from the shore, with two or three of the *dons* of the village, who very civilly pressed us to land, speaking, to our amazement, in broken English! We could but consent: and as we neared the shore we observed Danish flags hoisted on half a dozen flag-staffs, and the eyes of all the Westmen (and women) gazing upon us with astonishment.

We found the settlement was a fish-curing establishment, of which one Mr. Bryde and his son seemed to be at the head. First they took us to their house, and gave us Port

wine, which we had to drink in the most ceremonious manner, all standing round the table, and wishing universal health and prosperity.

We were then conducted over the whole fish-curing process. The fish are first split and cleaned, then laid flat on great lava stones, to dry in the sun: every evening they are piled in square heaps, and heavily pressed with stones till morning, when they were again spread out. Their curing takes some weeks. Men and women work together at this occupation, and a cleanly and intelligent race they seem to be.

Moreover we saw an enormous vat filled with a loathsome brown and yellow and green substance, an odious mass, that called forcibly to mind the Witches' cauldron in Macbeth. But, fair reader, it was haply for thee that it was seething, and working, and emitting odours which I trust I may never

meet with again where'er I roam. The substance was cod's liver: the manufacture, that of cod's liver oil!

We entered an Icclander's hut, a little grass-covered "bothie." It was dark and wretched-looking below; but there was an upper room, a sort of garret in the pitch of the roof, that had quite a comfortable look. It was lined with boards, and was very tolerably clean. There was an old blind man, a fine patriarchal fellow, eighty-six years old; his grandchildren were knitting and talking by his side, and all looked comfortable and happy.

After admiring the view of the mainland from a point near the village, when we got a first view of Heckla, we gave our friends a pressing invitation to come aboard; half a dozen of them accepted it, and we gave them a short cruise, and let them fire off our guns, and gave their boatmen a great Swede turnip,

which made them grin with delight; and the Westmen at last took their leave, vociferously happy, declaring they had never seen so beautiful a ship, never had been so royally entertained, in all their lives. On shoving off they treated us to three Danish cheers, which we responded to with three English ones, such as, I hope, beat theirs out of the field.

Next day we found ourselves becalmed in a bay near Grundevick, on the south-west coast of the island. We therefore took to fishing and with great success. We caught cod as fast as we could haul them in, and so large, that one great fellow out-poised a 28 lb. bag of shot which I weighed against him. Three men in a boat from the shore boarded us while we were at this occupation, and looked on at our fishing, sipping the rum we had given them, but unable to utter a word that was intelligible to us. At last one

of them considerably astonished us by asking whether we spoke Latin? "O perfectly," said we (for the honour of Oxford we could not have said less); and so we managed to stumble through a little conversation. He told us the fish we were catching were not worth the name of fish, but when at last the thirty-pounder came up, he seemed highly pleased. "Piscis est," he loudly exclaimed, and there was no questioning the fact!

Next morning we were off Cape Reikianes, and enveloped in a thick fog. Hove-to from time to time, and fished; but without success, though we had been told that this was the best place of all for the purpose. Caught a few whiting only, and one enormous ray, which we had to haul into our boat with the boat-hook.

The weather cleared, and we had a fine calm afternoon. We had now rounded the south-west cape of the island, and were enter-

ing the enormous bay, in the bight of which Reykiavick, the capital town, is situated. The scene was lovely. A long chain of mountains, which form the northern side of the bay, was in full sight. These mountains were of varied and elegant form, and many of them deeply capped with snow. The range terminated towards the west in that called *Snæfells Jokull*, the mightiest of them all, a grand conical mass of snow ; rather tamer perhaps in outline than the rest, but still a noble object.

A light and favourable breeze wafted us slowly up the wide deep bay, and in the course of the afternoon we anchored in the roadstead of Reykiavick, not however before we had been boarded by the most foolish and superannuated of pilots, whose constantly repeated advice, "*luff, luff*," (the only word of English nautical phraseology that he knew,) we invariably and spitefully neglect-

ed, to his great discomfiture. We were much surprised to find a French corvette in the roads, and as many as five or six foreign schooners, which gave the harbour quite a gay and bustling appearance. The corvette was there for the protection of French fishing vessels, of which there are upwards of 100 on the coast. The schooners come chiefly for dried fish.

Poor lonely Reykiavick! It is indeed a cold, arctic-looking capital! The struggle for existence against the ungenial climate is most evident, even in the architecture of the place. All looks poor and grim. A small village of Swiss chalets is perhaps the closest counterpart of it in our latitudes, but even such a village would be a formidable rival to the capital of Iceland. The best houses, those of the Danish merchants, are indeed comfortable enough within, but the general look of the place is most dreary and dispiriting.

The larger houses are built altogether of wood, imported from Denmark and Norway, while the cottagers' poor huts are massive stone to the square. This seems extraordinary, but we are told that the wooden structure is by far the warmer and more comfortable. A few broad half-built streets of such houses as these, a Lutheran church of some pretensions, a good-sized building called the college, and a solitary windmill, a dreary stagnant lake or pool as a background, flanked by a few dreary fields; imagine this, and the metropolis is before you.

However, the pleasure was great to have cast anchor in the wished-for port: and if in one direction the town and its environs were miserable, on the other side there were glorious mountain ranges rising from the waters of the bay, of exquisite contour and detail, and with deep fiords running up between

them. We were therefore in no humour to find fault, and we set about stowing our sails and putting all to rights with a feeling of great enjoyment.

We had not completed these tasks, and were "all hands" busy in our shirt sleeves, when we were boarded by a French officer from the corvette. He came for French news; of which, we blushed to say, we had absolutely none, though coming pretty direct from Cherbourg. He also brought a kind invitation from his captain to come aboard his vessel whenever we could find time.

All hands "turned in" at an unreasonably early hour, and all of us enjoyed our first whole uninterrupted night since leaving Liverpool. The next day was "the day of rest," and such in every sense we made it.

We had brought letters to some of the Danish residents in the town, a thing which it is quite necessary for every Iceland travel-

ler to attend to, for upon these persons he must depend to make all his travelling arrangements, and (unless he be fortunate enough to come in his own vessel) for board and lodging also. Mr. Siemsen seems to be the acknowledged patron of all English visitors, but indeed, as soon as our letters were delivered, each resident seemed to vie with the other in making our stay amongst them as agreeable as possible. I cannot refrain from mentioning by name our good-hearted friend Herr Johnson, the rector of the college, who, though an Icelfander by birth, and educated at Copenhagen, is John Bull all over, even in his very appearance, and adores our whole nation and all its acts and deeds. Nay, he even taught us "*Rule Britannia*," a song which I protest I had forgotten, all but the tune and the last line.

Count Van Tromp, the governor of the

island, also kindly threw open to us his house, and his soirées.

Two or three agreeable days were spent in Reykiavick and its neighbourhood, while preparations were making for our inland tour. The island of *Vidöe*, where the eider ducks are kept, formed one interesting excursion. We crossed the Bay of Reykiavick in our gig, Siemsen accompanying us to introduce us to the proprietor. We landed, and found the old gentleman at home ; he lives in his chateau, in the very midst of his nests, and is one of the few specimens of squirearchy in the country. With him we walked round the little islet ; in danger at every step of treading on a nest, if not on an old sitting duck herself, for they are so tame as hardly to take the trouble of getting out of one's way. The eider-down brought into trade is that which the poor ducks have plucked from their own breasts to form a lining for

their nests. The nests are stripped several times, and the poor ducks patiently repair their damages till they are nearly downless. Excellent coffee concluded the visit, which execrable "Portwein" had begun.

Here it was we first saw signs of that reckless church-desecration, (as we should call it,) which all strangers in Iceland notice, and complain of. The little church on this island was in fact their lumber-room. Dried fish, eider down, saddles, sacks, and rubbish, filled every pew. There is service here occasionally, and then all these valuables are bundled out for the day.

Then we had a merry day under the auspices of Herr Recktor Johnson. We were to *dejeuner* with him, and to ride afterwards, to prepare us for our long ride that was to come. The *dejeuner* passed off very pleasantly, with one speech on their part, setting forth the glories of England, and

one on our part, insisting upon the importance of Denmark in general, and Iceland in particular. The cookery was all in pure German, mostly untranslatable in an English stomach : we eat, however, out of sheer dread of an awful housekeeper, with a most ear-boxing countenance, who had made it all, and forced it down our throats. Then away we went, half a dozen of us, on the nicest of little horses, scurrying and running, rather than trotting, along the rough road, jostling each other in the bad and narrow parts, and making the best of every little bit of even ground. One imagined the pace to be near upon nine knots, till the watch showed us that an hour had been consumed at the end of the fourth mile.

Our destination was *Havna fiord*, a mercantile depôt, some eight miles from the capital. But before reaching it we had our first introduction to that strange and fearful

phenomenon of nature, an Iceland *lava field*. Often had we wondered what was the meaning of the great brown patches in our map marked with the word "*Hraun*." It was plain enough now what it meant. A land of crisp cinders. Cinders of all sizes, some as big as a church, flanking the path; other little ones sticking up hard and fast in the very middle thereof, as if to give the horses an opportunity of showing off their marvellous agility. Through about three miles of this rugged stuff we scrambled and shuffled along, when the snug little harbour and bay of Havna fiord appeared in sight; thence a short descent brought us to the village, and our party dispersed themselves hither and thither on mercantile business.

As for ourselves, we were led into the chief man's house to partake of course of "*Portwein*." Then followed "*Portwein*" somewhere else, and so on, for an hour. It

seemed as a law of nature herself, that the entering of any house must bring "Portwein" upon us, not to mention cigars. But at least it was offered with the greatest kindness and civility, and one of us, at any rate, drank and smoked with a good grace. The other of us was rather a "weaker vessel."

We returned late to Reykiavick, and "turned in" to our snug berths aboard as soon as possible, to be ready for our start inland the following day.

Thursday, June 30th.

The start was to take place from our friend Siemsen's house. We went ashore early to arrange all things, and lunched with him. Then came Johnson, and Siemsen, and all our acquaintances, to give us their good wishes, and about 3 P. M. we were fairly under way. It was a late hour for a start, but what of that? What is late or early in a land of perpetual day? We

formed an imposing cavalcade. No less than eighteen little horses. Four for our two selves and two guides, five for baggage, and a full relay of the whole nine, to be able to change in the middle of each day's journey. The little things were all loose, and had to be driven before us; and much amusement, and vexation too, did this driving cause us, throughout our tour.

Our route as far as *Havna fiord*, was that of our yesterday's ride. Our destination to-night, the hot springs of *Krisevick*, some four and twenty miles. Bad as we had thought the road to Havna fiord, it was "a turnpike" compared with that we found beyond that place. Our journey lay through a rough and dreary desert, interesting to a stranger even from its very desolation. It was almost all a lava-field, sometimes hilly, sometimes an almost level plain, with here and there a great round lava *bubble*, as high

as a house, which in rising in a half liquid state from the plain, and cooling suddenly, had cracked on every side from the apex to the circumference, exhibiting the appearance of a peeled orange with the quarters half torn open. The ground itself too, in one part of our march, was full of yawning chasms, just about wide enough to take in man and horse. All which phenomena are so many proofs of the terrible convulsions to which this island has at some time been exposed; and show its completely volcanic origin.

We had been travelling in a southerly direction all day, but late in the evening we suddenly turned eastwards, up the face of a steep hill, and after an hour or so of rugged mountain pass, we found ourselves on a very steep declivity, below which the steam of the *Krisevick* hot springs was visible. This was to be our resting-place to-

night. So we cautiously descended the crumbling hill-side, and were pleased to find ourselves upon a grassy plain of considerable extent. The question now was where to pitch our tent? Near the hissing springs of course, for the sheer novelty of the thing. So we fixed upon a green spot, close to a little spring of boiling water, which we meant to assist us in our cuisine, and there we unloaded our baggage horses. It was about 9 P. M., and it took us a good hour or more to set all things in order, to build and to furnish our temporary abode. W—— then “resolved himself” into cook, and I became housemaid; and we were soon feasting on a tin of capital soup, heated in the boiling spring.

Certainly this is not the spot one would select for a permanent residence! About fifty or sixty yards from us, under the mountain-side, there is what I can call nothing

else than a *steam-spring*. It throws up no water hardly, but a lofty column of compressed and roaring steam bursts forth incessantly from among its stones; making a noise very like the "blowing off" of a great engine boiler. Round this there are a dozen more little spouters, half water, half steam, all spluttering away in chorus; while behind our tent, all by itself, is a foul diabolical hole of hot blue mud, thick as starch, through which a lazy bubble makes its way every minute, shaking the very ground under our feet, and with a dead sound like the word "thud" "thud," which in five minutes' time we are sick of hearing. The ground too, and indeed most of the hill-side, is covered with all manner of coloured chemical compounds, which have been thrown up by these mud holes. There is sulphur without end, and nasty white salts, and blue mud and red mud, and green stuff and black.

In short, what with the steam, and the barren chemical heaps, the scene is not unlike that of English vitriol works. I could easily have fancied myself close by one of Muspratt's chimneys.

After dinner we went to explore, and approached the steam spring itself as close as we dared: but the ground was most treacherous and unsafe; a mere incrustation of sulphur or salt over an unknown depth of hot mud. I was very glad to get my chemical friend on terra firma again, without injury done, except to his boots.

We "turned in" towards midnight for our first night's tent repose. (It was, of course, as light as day.) Being well furnished with blankets, and waterproof defences to spread under them, we slept comfortably and soundly, till a rather late hour, in spite of the hissing steam, and the "thuds" of the foul blue hole. We found we were terribly short

handed. The two guides were much taken up with our eighteen horses, and it was really hard work for us two to strike our tent and pack up our canteen and bedding. Nevertheless we set about the matter with a good will, for we found that otherwise we should not be under way before noon. Having got all things in readiness, we left the men to pack the baggage on the horses. We then paid one more visit to the steam-spring, and spitefully endeavoured (though ineffectually) to choke the blue mud hole with sods. Then we set off to explore the adjoining hill-side, having heard that there were fine sulphur incrustations to be found there. We saw nothing however that repaid us for the trouble of the ascent. Returning to the valley, we rejoined our caravan, which was moving through the grassy plain in a southerly direction towards the village of *Krisesvick*. We soon reached this place, which,

though it is a poor miserable spot, is one of considerable importance as things go here. Here we had to pay a trifle for the grass our horses had picked up during the past night, amounting to about two-pence English per horse. We also got a draught of good milk, and we had an opportunity, during our half-hour's stay, of observing some of the peculiarities of Icelandic life. The huts of this village, like all others in the country, are grouped close together. They are formed of thick stone walls to the square, i. e. say eight feet from the ground: then comes a rafted roof, covered with green turf. They have an air of comfort and warmth, in spite of their primitive look. Close by them is a church, the best and largest building in the place. It was fitted with open pews, pulpit, altar, altar rails, and chancel screen, very much after our own English model, but after a very homely fashion. All round the village are meadows

of the very sweetest and greenest herbage, gay with buttercups and other flowers. They are carefully walled round with walls of turf, to prevent travellers like ourselves from turning loose our animals upon them. They are chiefly used for the support of their cows, of which there are a very considerable number in every village. In most places we could get as much milk as we wanted, and sometimes even cream: and a great treat it was, a most acceptable addition to our meagre stores.

Leaving *Krisevick* we struck across the plain in an easterly direction, at a distance of three or four miles from the sea. We cantered merrily over a sandy waste, crossed a little mountain pass, and then descended upon a dreary interminable plain of dry rough lava, which lay between the mountain ranges and the southern sea. Our pace was necessarily slackened here, and we plodded on, till the

sun had long passed his meridian, threading our way among the huge lava blocks, and following stray horses, right and left, into impracticable cul-de-sacs. At last the lake and the parsonage that was to be our lunching place came in sight; but before reaching it, we had nearly an hour of loose sand and shingle to cross, and then a shallow stream to ford, out of which we emerged upon good green grass, and there halted for an hour's rest and refreshment.

It was nearly 5 P. M. before we were in the saddle again, and we had barely accomplished half our proposed day's march. I would willingly have halted here for the night, but the spot was not very interesting, and time and fine weather were too precious to be lost, so on we pressed, for *Reykir*.

The afternoon's march was an improvement upon that of the morning. The ground was at least less rugged, and we were no

longer upon lava. First came a gradual ascent for at least two hours, and the higher we went, the finer grew the view of the endless southern sea, and the campagna-like plain that separated us from it. Then a huge round mountain mass appeared right before us in the hazy distance, which I knew by its position must be Heckla. It was thirty or forty miles from us, and between us and it was an interminable plain watered by the river *Whita* and *The Olfusa*. Out of this plain rose abruptly and majestically the classic and Italian form of the ridge *Ingolds-fjall*. This was the finest and most artistic view we had as yet enjoyed in the island. Even an artist accustomed to Pellegrino or Circeo would not have disdained to paint it.

The Olfusa, which lay before us, is one of those strange lakes, so characteristic of Icelandic geography, which are formed by the swelling-out of a great river just before it

reaches the sea, and are separated from the sea by a mere tongue of shingle, through which the water forces a passage here and there.

We now began to descend from the high plateau we had reached, into the plain that formed the margin of the river-lake. In so doing we had to cross another lava field, much to our disgust, for we were heartily tired of them. We reached the green plain at last, and skirted its northern boundary, close under the hills. Here we encountered another nuisance, swampy ground. Moreover our tired and hungry animals, whenever they had an opportunity, set off at full trot into the middle of the swamp, for a mouthful of food, causing us much trouble and many a five minutes' delay.

At last, on passing the village of *Hjalli*, the steam of the Geysir at *Reykir* burst upon our view, still however an hour distant, and the

sun had already set, which showed us it was late indeed. We pressed on therefore at our best pace, and crossing another swampy valley, we came upon a few low, steep ridges, with a furious stream between them. This we forded, and then springing from our horses in our excitement, we breasted the opposite hill on foot; then crossing a narrow plain, and getting our feet scalded with the hot water oozing from it, we stood at last, just at midnight, upon the limestone crater of the Geysir of *Reykir*.

Then came the long unpacking, when we should have been in bed, then tent pitching and arranging, then soup boiling and soup devouring, and then at length "the downy!" (if one may apply Dick Swiveller's expression to a lodging on the hard ground). The sun was a respectable height in the heavens again ere we closed our eyes; beginning his to-morrow before we had ended our to-day.

Saturday, July 2nd.

But what are decent hours to us, who have daylight all the twenty-four? It was near eleven A. M. when we first awoke, and became conscious of the bright sun beaming through the canvass, and a cool, pleasant breeze slightly shaking our frail dwelling-place. We started up, and gave wide entrance to both sun and air, and then sallied forth to forage for *hot water* among the neighbouring springs. It was easily found, hotter in our *chins* could bear; and coffee-making, in such a spot, gave us but very little trouble. Certainly this is the strangest country in the world! here, close by our tent, is a swampy, ay and grassy, plain; in which, as you walk along, you may wet one foot in cold water, and the other in boiling; and so on for a hundred yards! How *can* this be? are all these springs unconnected? Do they rise from such different and widely separated

sources as not to influence the temperature of each other? It must be so. Yet it is almost incredible.

As our journey to-day was to be a very short one, we had plenty of time to look about us. First the neighbouring Geysir was examined. It was the first we had seen, and therefore it interested us greatly, although it is as nothing compared with the Great Geysir, which we saw a few days later. Here, however, let me define a Geysir.

A Geysir is a spring or fountain of hot water, which throws up occasionally a series of jets, and then remains for a time in a state of comparative quiescence. Hooker, an Icelandic traveller, affirms that the word Geysir in that language means "intermittent;" if this be the case it is very aptly applied. In this instance the Geysir had a regular *period* of about three hours, remaining at rest (or rather merely boiling, and sending forth

steam) for that length of time, and then throwing up in quick succession jets of boiling water for fifteen or twenty minutes. It was "*going off*" when we first reached it last night, and to-day again we had opportunities of observing it. The basin from which it springs is a calcareous deposit, evidently increasing in bulk by constant petrification, and thus it is already raised a little above the level of the ground. This Geysir was pretty and elegant, rather than grand, and would have done more honour to the gardens of Chatsworth than to the rude scenery of this wild spot. But the stranger in Iceland should not omit to visit it, for in truth it is a wonderful phenomenon, and one hardly to be satisfactorily explained even by the most ingenious and scientific theories.

We next walked away a few hundred yards from our tent, in search of an ebbing and flowing hot spring, of which our guides

had spoken. We found it close by the side of the stream we had to ford last night, under the steep bank. It was a boiling pool of beautifully clear green water; and its restless changes were very interesting to watch. Unfortunately all my statistical notes are lost, so that I cannot vouch for the exact accuracy of the following account of its *period*, but I think I am not far from the truth.

Beginning from its lowest ebb, it would flow for about two minutes, rising in that space of time some two feet perpendicular. Then there ensued a furious boiling, which agitated the whole surface, and caused the water to overflow into the neighbouring stream. This would continue about one minute, then the bubbles would suddenly cease, and the pool would ebb, in a few minutes' time, down to its former level. After which it would again begin to flow as before. So

hot was its water that a bird which we had shot, on being thrown in, was speedily boiled.

This bird was an *oyster-catcher*, a whole colony of which had taken up their abode here. Their bright plumage and shrill scream tended to enliven our walk, though I should be loth to live constantly within ear-shot of them. They seemed greatly to resent our invasion of their privacy.

About 2 or 3 P. M. we began our day's march. We wound round the base of the great *Ingoldsfjall*, and struck across a swampy plain, for the river *Whíta*. Iceland swamps do not appear to be very formidable, and we easily reached the river's bank. It is here a noble stream, say two hundred yards in width, and is both rapid and deep. We thought for the moment that we had never beheld finer river scenery—but this was, perhaps, rating it rather too enthusiastically. On the oppo-

site bank we meant to pitch our tent, and take our Sunday's rest.

But how to reach the opposite bank was the question. First the ferry boat had to be coaxed over to our side; this took three quarters of an hour. All the horses were then unloaded, and the baggage stowed in the boat. Then, when all was in readiness, we surrounded our little animals, and partly by hootings, partly by throwing stones, we forced them into the stream. It was a wild-looking sight to see them swimming in a close-packed mass for the opposite shore, with all but their little heads submerged. On reaching the other side they quietly waited till our men came and took them into custody again.

Here we pitched our tent, upon the dry shingle of the river's bank. We had been drawn hither in hopes of salmon fishing; and had been recommended by Mr. Siemsen to

the resident proprietor of the fishery. But, alas, the very name of the river had given us misgivings from the first: and we found it even as we had conjectured; namely, that the *Whíta* meant, *The white river*; that is to say, *snow white*, like the glacier torrents of Switzerland, in which no good-sized fish, however amiable, would rise at the fly. I caught a couple of sea trout, perhaps 2 lb. weight apiece, but we could not induce any more to rise. The aforesaid "Proprietor," however, rose most freely at everything we put before him. "Take some coffee," said I; "Ya, Gott," was his prompt, and, as I thought, most unnecessarily profane reply. I am happy to say, however, that *gott* means *good*, and so we may hope that the expression was simply equivalent to the German "Ya wohl."

Sunday, July 3rd.

We told our guides they might go to their

“mass” to-day, in the neighbouring village, and that we would watch about the tent. They seemed pleased with the tidings of a day’s rest, but they did not move off to their “mass” with any great alacrity. In the afternoon we got across the stream, and walked off to explore the river Sog. This stream comes down from the great lake of Thingvalla, and joins the Whíta about four miles above our present encampment. We wished to see whether it was clearer and more fit for fishing than Whíta, and this it proved to be, but our arrangements did not allow of our getting a day’s fishing in it.

Returning homewards, we reached our tent about 7 P. M., but, alas, no nicely cooked repast awaited our arrival! We are our own cooks, and, moreover, there is no natural hot water to be had here, so that our cookery is rather a serious business, seeing we had no fuel nor fire-place, nothing but naphtha and a

spirit lamp ; for Mr. Siemsen would not hear of our carrying charcoal. Worse than all, my enterprising Maitre-d'Hotel has taken it into his culinary brain that he should like to try his hand at frying one of my yesterday's salmon trout. He tucks up his sleeves, and sets to work upon the creature in good earnest, and in process of time (alas, a long process of a long time!) he and the spirit lamp succeed in producing a dish bearing some faint resemblance to the salmon cutlets that I have often rejoiced in at a Highland breakfast.

This morning I had seen what I believed to have been a seal, disporting itself in the waters. Later in the day I fancied I saw another swimming quietly down the current. I hailed W—— to bring his gun, which he did, and fired a charge of swan-shot into the beast. What was our astonishment to see the poor creature make directly for the land-

ing-place of the ferry, where half a dozen men were standing, and emerge from the water, a great Iceland sheep dog! Happily unharmed, especially as we had not one word of Icelandic apology at command, and our two interpreters (who, by the way, understood about as much English as we Icelandic) were both far away.

Monday, July 4th.

Our original plan was to have followed up the river Whíta to the Geysirs, which lie near one of its sources: but as this route seemed not to promise much of interest, we changed our plan; determining to follow up the river *Sog*, which we had seen yesterday, as far as *Thingvalla*, and so visit the Geysirs from thence.

Our friend the proprietor of the fishery, who seemed to consider himself our patron and guardian angel, could not bear to part with us so soon, and resolved to accompany

us. We kept the left bank of the Whíta for five or six miles, passing in our way a farmhouse more opulent-looking than most, where we procured a draught of good milk, and that at the hands of one of the finest-looking Iceland girls we had seen, who was dressed completely in the rough and sable garments that Iceland women think fit to wear.

Then we crossed the Whíta, making the horses swim over as before, and ourselves and our baggage being conveyed in a ferry boat. After this we proceeded in a north-westerly direction, having the river *Sog* on our left hand, and a round hill called *Búrfell* on our right. The road was a continual but gradual ascent; and we did not see much of the river *Sog*, till we came abreast of a lake called *Alfta vatn*, through which it passes. Here we lunched, under shelter of the turf wall of a village meadow, in a place where our horses could get a mouthful of

grass. Our "proprietor" had led the way all along, and was quite ready for his bread and cheese.

Proceeding onwards we soon came in sight of a series of magnificent waterfalls, down which the whole of the river *Sog* is precipitated. There are no less than four distinct falls. First a precipitous fall, then a short rapid, then the second fall, which is broken into five separate streams, all meeting again in the pool below. Then the third fall, in which the waters are undivided, and pour over a precipitous ledge, that lies obliquely across the stream. And lastly the fourth fall, which is very similar to the first. The whole effect was truly grand, and though it had not the mass of Schaffhausen, nor the height nor scenery of Terni, I do not know when I have gazed at falling water with more astonishment and delight.

We drew closer and closer to the water, and stood on the very brink of the third fall, just opposite the oblique ledge. Not however with impunity. The place is cursed with a plague of flies, which positively darken the surrounding air, and almost stifle and blind the rash traveller who ventures among them. They only reach just to a certain spot, like choke damp in a coal mine, and with a very similar effect upon all who pass the line of safety. However, we rode right through the thick of them, and soon reached another lake, broad and shallow, called *Ulfjots vatn*; and fording across one of its shallow bays, we soon came upon another torrent of the river *Sog*.

Here a new wonder presented itself, which, as I am sure no one will believe it, might as well remain untold. Approaching the brink of a steep bank, we found ourselves right over a turbulent eddy formed by a fall

in the stream. I say eddy; but it was an *eddy of fish*, rather than of water, for of water but little could be seen. It was a mass of great red trout, famous fellows, of two and three pounds weight, which ever and anon kept leaping at the plague of flies, that also haunted the water here; and when they had leapt, *so closely packed were their brethren below, that it was some little time before they shook down into their element again!* They lay floundering at the top, as I have seen sheep on each other's backs aboard a crowded steam-boat. While in the air above innumerable terns and kittiwakes were wheeling and screaming, attracted by either the fish or the flies; I know not which of the two.

We were maddened with the flies, and glad to get on, but this time they were not easily shaken off, and continued to persecute us for an hour or so, when happily a shower

of rain came on, and was "the torrent of their overthrow," to our great satisfaction. Strange to say, this was the only place where we experienced any annoyance from flies, though most travellers in the island have complained of them loudly.

We had now reached the great *Thingvalla vatn*: and here our friend the "proprietor" at last took his leave. He had certainly been useful, though laughably officious; (officious persons are always laughed at, however much good they may do). We loaded him with thanks, and dollars, and snuff, all of which he seemed to prize highly; and so we parted.

We had then a long and rather dull ride along the eastern shore of the great lake; and it came on to rain, for the first time since we began our tour. However, as we neared the head of the lake, the weather began to clear, and the scenery also im-

proved. The track led us away from the shore, and we gained a considerable elevation, when suddenly, after passing a lonely farm, it turned towards the lake again, and we began to descend. Shortly we found ourselves upon the brink of one of those extraordinary chasms which the natives call by the euphonious name of "*gja*." And truly no name can be rugged or break-jawed enough to express the horror of one of these break-neck *gjas*! The craters in the moon are the only *familiar* objects to which the general reader may be referred to catch a glimpse of their astounding reality. Or imagine two cinders, about a couple of miles long, placed a little way apart, and viewed through a "microscope of extra power;" and you will have some notion of this *Hrafna-gja*, on the brink of which our little ponies now stood; and across which our unflinching pathway lay.

I cannot say however that there is actual danger in passing them: it is only a little sliding down on one side, and scrambling up on the other; and Iceland ponies are like goats at that, and will carry you almost wherever you dare go on foot.

The *gja* once passed, we came upon a famous even road, winding close by the head of the lake, through low brushwood of birch and willow. Here we could trot along, and a short hour brought us to the place of our destination, the village of Thingvalla, one of the most important places in the island.

As the sky looked threatening, we did not like to trust to our tent, if any safer shelter was to be had. We applied, therefore, to the clergyman of the place, and were immediately put in full possession of *the Parish Church*. This custom is universal in Iceland. They have no sort of religious scruple about the matter. The church of the place is, as a

matter of course, the caravanseraï for all travellers of any gentlemanly pretensions. I asked the curate how this could be allowed? "Oh," he said, "we have no other place in our villages fit for you; so we think it a duty to put you here." This is carrying out pretty freely the principle of "I will have mercy and not sacrifice;" and it was difficult not to feel that we were committing a sacrilege; seeing we could not altogether refuse the poor Lutheran church the title of a holy place, as did that French artist, who, in his account, is careful never to give these places a holier name than that of "*Temple*." *Heathen Temple*, I suppose, he would imply.

Having, however, overcome our first scruples, there was nothing for it but to make oneself at home. So we spread our blankets on each side the altar rails, and washed in one pew, and cooked soup in another; and made coffee in the pulpit, to prevent the

flickerings of the spirit lamp; and then laid down to rest.

Tuesday, July 5th, at Thingvalla.

We spent the day at this place, sending our baggage horses on towards the Geysirs, and intending to follow them at "express" pace to-morrow.

Thingvalla is well worth a day's delay. It is beautifully situated, at the head of the lake of that name; and a fine amphitheatre of mountains rises to the northward, beyond the plain in which it stands. It is also in immediate proximity to the most wonderful of all the *gjas*, called *Almanna gja*. This is a huge chasm some miles in length, stretching in a northerly direction from the head of the Thingvalla lake. It divides the great plain into two distinct parts, of which the westernmost is of a much higher level than the eastern one. And it would seem as if this yawning chasm had been made by the

sudden upraising of the western portion of the plain by means of some subterranean agency. It should be remarked that the western face of the chasm is precipitous, while the eastern and lower side has a gradual slope, as if it had fallen away from the other, during the upheaving. An additional feature in this extraordinary scene, is a good-sized stream, which pours in an unbroken fall over the higher ledge, and continues its course for some distance along the bottom of the chasm, till at last it bursts out into the open plain.

Having thoroughly explored this wonder, we betook ourselves to the curate, to beg his boat for a cruise on the lake. Latin was our only means of communication, and we found it an arduous task to talk Latin; every word had to be hunted out, as it were, from among the old rubbish and lumber of the mind. Armed at last with the curate's permission,

we set off to find his boat, in the direction he pointed out to us ; but, to our dismay, we found the ground beset with strange long cracks, full of the clearest water, into which we could look down to a depth that seemed infinite, our gaze being only arrested by the want of light below. These cracks were of all sizes ; the smaller ones such as we could step over, the larger quite beyond a leap ; but in all of them, both small and great, the depth and clearness of the water was extraordinary : we could not help shuddering as we gazed into them ; and a proposition to bathe in them was negatived unanimously. The glassy water looked as if it would have altogether refused to support one on the surface ; and we could not help speculating upon the abstruse question, as to which Geysir would have had the honour of belching forth our boiled bones, had we sunk into the bowels of the earth, down these fathomless holes.

Doubling round a dozen of these chasms, we found the curate's boat at last. Having launched it, we piloted ourselves through many a narrow creek of unfathomable depth, and then reached the open lake, which, to our astonishment, we found so shallow as hardly to float our boat. We pulled, however, to a deeper part, and having plenty of rods with us, we trolled for a time, but without success. Growing tired, we betook ourselves to the shore, and managed to land a few nice-looking red trout with the fly. We then lighted a moss fire, and dined upon our prey.

Wednesday, July 6th. Thingvalla to Geysirs.

Leaving the greater part of our baggage locked up in the church at *Thingvalla*, we set off towards the *Geysirs*, whither a portion of our effects had been forwarded yesterday.

For an hour or more we retraced our route of last Monday ; through the pleasant under-wood, across the awful *Hrafnagja*, and to the lonely farm beyond. Here our route struck off to the left, and began to take us away from the lake, up among the hills. We had a long day's journey before us, and we pushed along as fast as we could ; but we were now upon lava, over which it is impossible to make many miles in the hour. After a time we came upon a curious crater-like mound, composed of crisp cinder, of all manner of bright colours. On reaching it we found it was a mere shell, hollow within ; and we could look down from the top into a spacious cavern, extending we know not how far on all sides. Indeed, we could not but come to the conclusion that the whole of this lava-field is, more or less, hollow ; for many were the great caverns we had already passed this morning as we rode along, and we re-

solved, should we ever undertake this journey again, to come provided with ropes and torches and all necessary appliances for a good cruise under-ground.

A couple of hours more, of not very interesting scenery, brought us to the *Laughar vatn*, a small lake, on the border of which we stopped to lunch. We procured good milk from a neighbouring village, and then went down to the margin of the lake to visit some hot springs we had observed there. These springs throw out a perfect torrent of hot water, which finds its way through a bed of shingle into the lake. We are told that many others spring up under the bed of the lake itself, and keep its waters at a high temperature throughout the year. How pleasant must this be in the dreary winter, for the poor natives who live on its margin!

Our saddles being placed on fresh horses, we proceeded on our way. We first crossed

a grassy and swampy plain, richly watered by innumerable torrents, which seemed to spring into life at once, from the bosom of the neighbouring hills. Making a short cut, we just skirted the important village of *Mit-dalr*, and shortly after we left the level country, and became involved among low ridges, the outlying spurs of the chain of hills on our left. We passed through a pleasant wooded country, (that is to say, *brush-wooded*, for no wood in Iceland rises to higher dignity,) and in the midst of this we came upon a considerable and rapid stream, where there is the oddest and most dangerous contrivance by way of a bridge that I ever met with in my life. I despair, however, of giving a very lucid explanation of it to the reader. In the first place, be it understood, the stream has to be crossed just above a roaring waterfall; but the ledge of this fall is split asunder in the middle by a narrow chasm,

down which of course the water pours on every side. You begin your passage, then, by fording till you reach the chasm ; across this a few planks are thrown ; with, happily, a rail on each side ; by this means, then, you cross the middle part, and finish the transit by again fording to the further bank. The main danger is that of getting drifted down too low to hit off the bridge, for of course there is no chance of taking your beast right up against the stream, and if you find you are " making too much lee way," there is nothing for it but to " bout ship " and make a hasty retreat to the bank, and start again. If the water is high it is rather a frightful business, but it need not be dreaded in moderately dry weather.

We gradually emerged from the hills, and an hour before reaching our destination were cantering merrily over a noble grassy plain, with the steam of the *Geysirs* in full view.

Soon a white speck became visible, which proved to be our tent, pitched already by the faithful *Alexeus*, our avant-courier. We raced along, full of the highest spirits and excitement, but trembling lest the treacherous *Geysir* should "go off" while we were yet too far away to see the noble exhibition to advantage. We reached the tent, threw ourselves from our horses, and the next minute were standing on the very verge of the crater of this wonder of the world!

Even in its quiescent state, the *Great Geysir* is a most interesting and beautiful object. At such a time it appears as a round shallow basin, of grey calcareous stone, filled to the brim with the clearest water, at an almost boiling temperature. The basin is some 70 feet across, and in the centre of this is a natural funnel, 16 feet in diameter at top, but soon contracting to 10 or 11, leading down to the bowels of the earth. By constant

petrification this basin is considerably elevated above the ground in its neighbourhood, to the height of say 4 or 5 feet. Every now and then, at intervals quite uncertain, a noise is heard like the firing of a cannon underground, the earth trembles all around, and an enormous bubble rises to the surface up the mighty tube, agitating the water in the basin, and causing it slightly to overflow. This phenomenon is of frequent recurrence, and often passes over without leading to any further demonstration.

But not so when an eruption is about to take place, an event which happens sometimes once, sometimes twice, in the twenty-four hours, sometimes once in two days. On such occasions, thunder after thunder shakes the ground, bubble after bubble rises, each one higher than that which preceded it, then an over-loaded column of water is seen struggling slowly upwards for a moment, and then

at last, with a stupendous roar, the whole mass is hurled away into the air to an incredible height, and falls in steaming cascades on every side. Woe to the careless traveller who has stood upon the brink an instant too long ! Certain death is his ; at least if a sea of boiling water can do him harm. Many a time were we scared away by false alarms, knowing that, if we waited till the moment of eruption, it would be too late to fly. But at a distance of fifty yards this astonishing spectacle can be viewed with perfect safety, and at about that distance our tent was boldly pitched ; from whence, next morning, we had the satisfaction of witnessing the noble sight, constantly renewed for four or five minutes' time.

There are two other *Geysirs* in the immediate neighbourhood ; one, of respectable proportions ; the other, a mere garden fountain. The larger of these two is called *Strokker*,

and though it can hardly be compared in size and grandeur with the *Great Geysir*, still makes a very tolerable eruption. It differs in character from the *Great Geysir*, first in having no basin above its funnel, and no water ordinarily in the funnel itself to the depth of 10 feet from the surface; and, secondly, in the very amiable peculiarity of being *excitable*. For, strange to say, an eruption may be brought about at any time in *Strokker*, by merely throwing sods or stones down the pipe. When this is done, the water, which is usually gurgling and steaming some 10 feet down, begins to grow more boisterous and noisy, and at last, after many a preliminary attempt, it rushes up the pipe, and carries the provoking sods or stones high into the air in a boiling and muddy cascade. After about a dozen such efforts it becomes exhausted, and can hardly be excited again to action for a period

of two or three hours. Poor *Strokker* got but little rest while we stayed here!

The third Geysir is a pretty little spouting thing, its pipe about 8 inches across, and the height of its eruptions, say 15 or 20 feet. Curiously enough, it has a regular *period* of about 55 minutes.

Besides the three Geysirs, the whole spot is crowded with ebbing and flowing wells, boiling springs, and mud holes; all of which seem to be perfectly unconnected, and independent of each other. One large boiling pool attracted our particular notice and admiration, from its great depth, the beautiful clearness of its water, and the pretty calcareous incrustations on its sides. It served us for all our cookery; and made good coffee, without the aid of our spirit lamp.

We retired early to rest, that we might sleep lightly, and start up at once at the

first warning of an eruption of the Geysir in the night.

It was about 4 A. M. that I was busily dreaming of a Geysir that had broken out in the Isis at Oxford. I was pulling round it in my skiff, and listening in admiration to its roars, when suddenly it struck me that I was not at Oxford at all! Yet the roaring noise was plain enough! "Why it is the real Geysir itself! Up with you, W——!" We burst through the tent, and half awake as we were, there we stood face to face with the mighty fountain, and half stupified with astonishment at the stupendous display of nature's power exhibited before us. The eruption was at its height. By subterranean efforts repeated every moment, a huge column of boiling water was constantly hurled into the air to the height of some hundred feet, and fell all round, almost to our feet, in beautiful feathery

cascades, which although much hidden on the leeward side by the enormous volume of steam evolved, were visible enough "to windward."

It was a grand and noble sight, I can conceive nothing more wonderfully strange among nature's wonders, or better worth coming a thousand miles to see.

The eruption over, we found time to slip on our shoes, then rushed to the basin, and found it dry. We advanced to the centre, and found that the water had sunk in the pipe almost out of sight. This is invariably the case after eruptions; and is one of the most curious facts connected with these Geysirs, and one moreover which is thought by the learned to afford some clue to the discovery of their real causes.

We took this opportunity of sounding down the Great Geysir pipe, and ran out eleven fathoms. At that depth there would

seem to be a bend in its direction, which prevents the lead from sinking lower.

Thursday, July 7th. At the Geysirs.

We determined upon remaining here to-day, in hopes of witnessing another eruption of the Geysir. But we are told that dry weather and neap tides are both of them circumstances unfavourable to its vigorous action. Poor *Strokker* was unmercifully persecuted all day to make up for the sullenness of his big brother.

In the afternoon, getting tired of remaining on watch, we resolved to ascend a high hill to the westward, called *Bjornafell*, in order to improve our geographical ideas of the district. We toiled straight up his steep rough side, and in due time stood on the summit. The scene presented to us well repaid our labour, and that not merely in a geographical point of view. On the east there lay the great grassy plain in which

the Geysirs are situated, which stretches away to the southward, almost to the sea. Beyond this plain, some thirty miles away, rises the conical *Hecla* and his chain of dark lava hills; a poor uninteresting object, compared with the far loftier snow-clad forms just visible in the dim distance beyond him, the *Eyafilla* and *Myrdalls Jokulls*, the same that had attracted our attention on board the yacht, when first we sighted the land.

On the west were countless peaks towering far above us, and all of most fantastic form: *Skjaldbreid*, and *Skrita*, and the precipitous *Bloudfell*, and the huge icy *Ok*, among which a rude path is practicable from hence to Thingvalla.

But to the north, what a scene presented itself! Here indeed were but few fantastic peaks to entertain the eye; but we looked into the very centre and *backbone* of the island, and all was a uniform interminable

frozen mass. It was enough to make one's heart sink to gaze upon these cold endless plains; these "thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice;" so different are they, so infinitely more saddening and hopeless (yet I know not why) than the deepest and most icy solitudes of Switzerland. They, to my mind, have always something cheering and inspiring about them, but such a charm is wholly wanting here. Perhaps the summer is too short, and too lukewarm while it lasts, to permit one to rejoice in the idea of cold.

We descended again to the plain and to our tent. The Geysir had been quiescent during our absence, and only gave vent to an occasional bubble for the rest of the day. However, we have seen him in his glory once, and are content. Our cuisine flourished wonderfully with so much hot water close by, and after a comparatively sump-

tuous repast, prepared by W——, we retired to rest.

Friday, July 8th. The Geysirs to Thingvalla.

The difficulty here of a morning is, not to get *hot* water, but water cold enough for the purposes of the toilet. It was in vain we looked for it among the neighbouring springs. I made a dam of sods, far enough, as I thought, from the boiling source of a little rill, and promised myself a first-rate warm bath; but after waiting till it filled I found I could not even bear my hand in it. It was “Water, water everywhere, but not a drop to” *wash in!*

The Geysir was implacable. He had been quiet all night, and was quiet now. We sent our baggage off, and lingered another hour, but all in vain, he would not “show” again. So we heaped up another mound on the brim of the unhappy *Strokker*, and after

getting one more good "rise out of him," we mounted our horses, and cantered away.

Our journey was but a retracing of our steps of Wednesday, with the unpleasant variety of showers. We reached Thingvalla once more in safety, and took up our old quarters in the church.

Saturday, July 9th. Thingvalla to Reykiavick.

A miserable day, rainy and foggy, a journey before us of above forty miles, and the scenery apparently very uninteresting. We began by crossing the above-mentioned *Almanna gja*, and plodded on, all cold and wet, over stony plains and ridges without number. We lunched in the rain, in a swampy field, without a particle of shelter; after which we left one of our guides and the baggage horses to follow us as they could, and we ourselves with the other guide pushed on for Reykiavick, at the fastest

Icelandic pace, driving the loose unladen horses before us. The pretty bay of Reykiavick at last appeared, with the French corvette at anchor in the roads. It was like returning to a home; so long did we seem to have been wanderers among these barren hills. We cantered along mercilessly over the last two hours of our journey, and were glad to dismount once again at Siemsen's hospitable door. Our good friends in Reykiavick were soon around us, loading us with congratulations on our safe return, and above all things anxious to hear a word or two dropped in favour of their poor arctic country, and in admiration of its wonders. I think we fully satisfied this desire, and that without departing from the truth.

Then a signal was hoisted, and answered from the schooner, and in a few minutes we stood once again upon the deck of our floating home.

We stayed but a few days more in *Reykjavick*, fêted by our kind acquaintances, and doing all that our salt beef and mouldy biscuits could do to fête them in return. However, we had in our possession a few well-relished treats. The Governor delighted in our North Wiltshire cheese, which he persisted in pronouncing to be "un veritable Chester." The barrel of Alsopp's beer was an acceptable novelty to many, the Scotch whisky had its admirers, and Laborde, the French captain, could not resist the charms of Benson's "Trabucos." And when, on Wednesday the 13th, we at last weighed anchor, we parted from our friends, I am sure, with hearty and mutual regrets. It was a fine calm evening, and we dropped slowly down the bay, our English colours all displayed, and answered by a dozen Danish ones from flag-staffs in the town. At midnight we were well outside, steer-

ing north-west, for the basaltic caves of *Stappen*.

It was not till Friday the 15th that we hove to off *Stappen*. We had been delayed by calms and baffling airs, and so we had abundant time to fish, and caught enough, of cod and haddock, to last the whole ship's company for a month to come. The great *Snæfel*, the highest of the mountains of Iceland, rises in icy magnificence above this spot, forming a noble background to the view. We lowered a boat, and visited some curious caverns of basalt, chiefly interesting for the innumerable sea-birds that frequent their rocky ledges. Then landing at the village we visited the governor of this promontory, the most gentlemanly, well read, and intellectual person we had met with in the island. He talked English, but complained that he had lost his fluency in it, and seemed afraid to speak it. His name was

Thorsteinson. He lived surrounded by books, of which a great part were standard English works, but he was old and nearly blind, and could no longer study them. We pitied him from our hearts; chained as he was by a miserable government appointment to this dreary spot, in what Lytton Bulwer well describes as "solitary confinement for the mind;" without one kindred spirit near him, and in its fullest sense *alone*. Yet he was most cheerful and content, thus teaching a wholesome lesson to all restless and unquiet souls, who roam about the world in search of peace, and forget the wise words of Horace,

"Cælum, non animum, mutant, qui trans mare currunt."

And now the vessel's head was put south-east, and we are fairly on our way for England. A favourable breeze wafted us that night across this great south-western bay, and in my morning watch, I found myself

doubling *Cape Reikianes*, the south-western extremity of the island.

All *Saturday, the 16th*, we ran merrily along the southern coast, with an off-shore wind, and consequently the smoothest of seas, and that night we were well up with our old acquaintances, the *Westmann Islands*; having found time during the day, to spend an hour ashore, exploring one of those extraordinary shingle beds at the mouth of a great river, which I before mentioned as a characteristic of Iceland scenery. The harpooning of an enormous shark (for such we felt sure it was) enlivened our evening; but we had made fast the harpoon in our hurry to the end of our "jib-haulyards," and we lost it at once, harpoon, rope, and all!

Next morning found us abreast of a rocky spot called *Portland Island*; (for we had determined to stick to the coast, and see as far to the eastward as was convenient.) Here

we again lowered a boat, and pulled in shore. We found among other wonders a natural rocky arch, under which the schooner would easily have sailed, masts and all. Also a kind of submerged crater, which might have served as a natural dock, had we required one. We then coasted on till evening, but finding the scenery growing inexpressibly tame and uninteresting, we resolved not to trust ourselves another night upon the coast, nor to lose the advantage of a fine northerly breeze. So off we went on a southerly course, for the "*Batt of Lewis*" in the *Hebrides*, and before the morning of the 18th, Iceland had vanished from our sight, and we were once more on the wide unbounded sea.

After a rather boisterous and wintry, but rapid passage, we sighted two lonely Scotch islands, *Rona* and *Barra*, on the morning of the 21st, and on the 23rd, were at anchor in

the snug harbour of *Stornaway*. Here we rode out in safety a long southerly gale; but by the kindness of Sir J. Mathieson and his factor, the days were pleasantly spent upon his salmon rivers.

We then threaded our way through Skye, and Mull, and Islay “sounds;” sighted venerable old Ailsa on the morning of *August 2nd*; and cast anchor on the 3rd in Fleetwood harbour.

And if this account of a summer excursion should give the reader any fraction of the pleasure that the writer experienced in undertaking it, he will have the satisfaction of feeling that his time was not altogether thrown away, nor wasted upon his own gratification; but that his enjoyment has contributed in some degree, however slight, to that of others.

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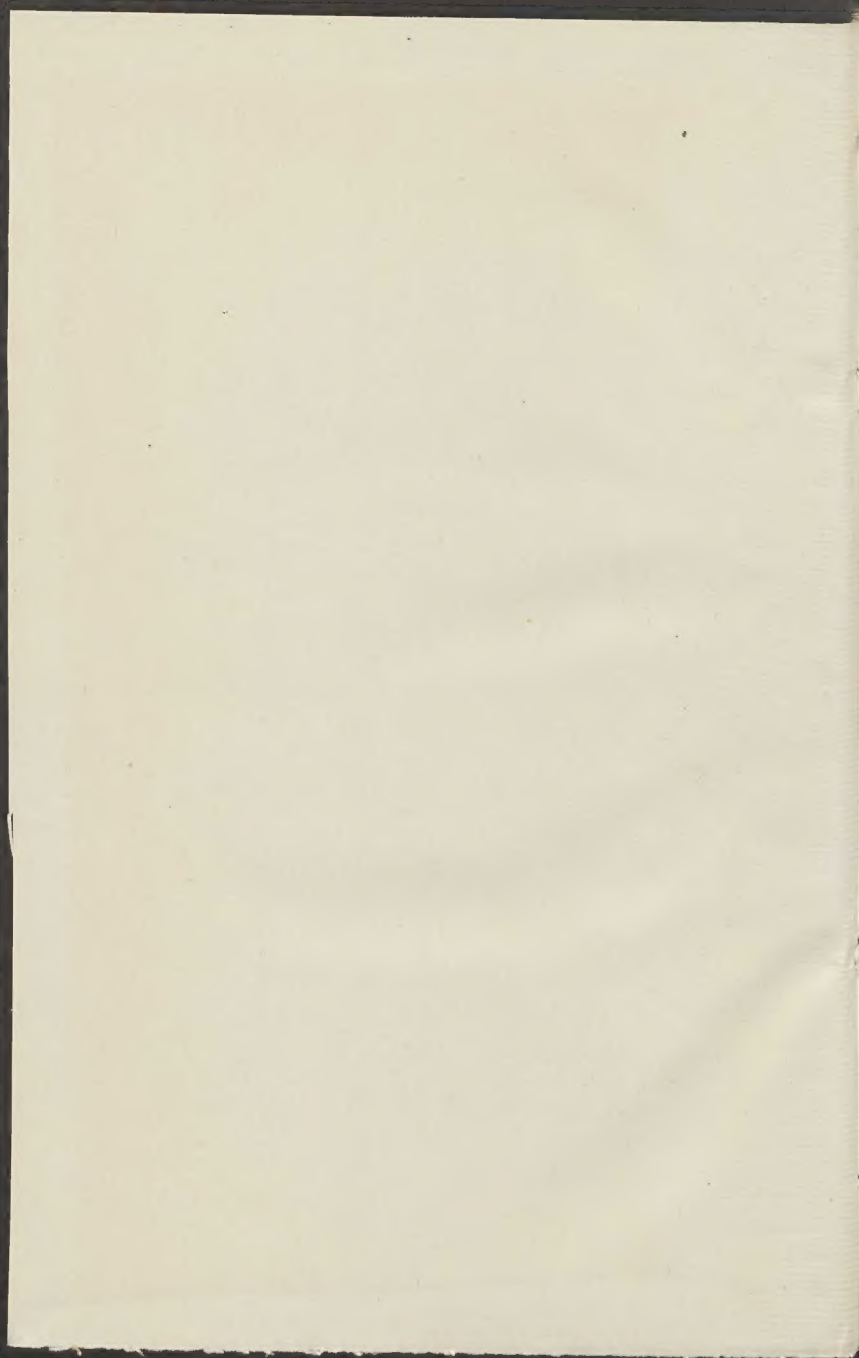
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